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Asilomar State Beach and Conference Grounds Concept Plan October 2, 2003

The Department of Parks and Recreation has developed a *Concept Plan* for Asilomar State Beach and Conference Grounds. The Concept Plan is based on the past research, previously received public scoping comments and recently performed planning analysis. Key elements of the Concept Plan include planning goals, identification of primary planning issues and preliminary resource management guidelines for Asilomar. The Concept Plan's highlights are presented below.

Plan Goals

The plan goals provide broad statements of desired outcomes which state the Department's general resource management intentions and provide general guidance for future management of the park's resource values. The goals of the Asilomar General Plan include:

- Protect the learning environment for training center and conference attendees.
- Increase the efficiency of park operations, circulation, and parking.
- Restore and protect the historic core.
- Restore and protect the park's natural environment.
- Protect the park's ambience and character.
- Enhance Asilomar's sense of place as a "refuge by the sea."
- Enhance the visitor experience for both conference ground guests and day visitors.
- Enhance interpretation opportunities at the park, and
- Be sensitive to the park's surroundings and local community.

Primary Planning Issues

The primary planning issues for the Concept Plan describe the primary resource constraints and opportunities at Asilomar that have been identified by the Department's previous public scoping and planning analysis as warranting future management attention.

- *Transportation, circulation, and parking.* Opportunities exist to reduce traffic impacts on park resources and adjacent neighborhoods through redesign and relocation of park structures, entrances, trails, circulation, and parking.

- *Park interpretive and educational resources, programs, and facilities.* Opportunities exist to enhance the park's interpretive and educational programs and facilities, particularly related to historic resources, and the history of the conference center.
- *Regional influences and park's relationship with surrounding areas.* Opportunities exist for enhancing and providing additional beach access to accommodate the increasing public use.
- *Growing demand for recreational opportunities and visitor experiences.* The State and the Monterey Bay region continue to experience a growing demand for recreational opportunities. The plan will address opportunities for appropriate visitor facilities that may require the removal and relocation of existing facilities and structures while maintaining the existing building to open space ratio. The plan will address the need to continue and maintain the visitor experience while maintaining the stewardship of the unit's cultural, ecological, and biological resources.
- *Visitor use impacts on resources.* The General Plan will evaluate the impacts of actions identified in the plan and visitor use on resources, including the historic nature of the conference center and natural resources of the beach.

Concept Plan Management Guidelines

While the plan goals provide management direction based on broad statements of desired outcomes for the park, management guidelines: (1) describe the physical, natural, social condition or degree of function a resource must meet to attain or sustain the plan goals, or, (2) provide specific direction for future park management by specifying management actions or resource standards for interpreting and/or achieving the park's management goals.

Key future management and park development guidelines currently under consideration within the Asilomar Concept Plan include:

- *Restore visitor use of the Social Hall to be more consistent with its traditional and intended use by relocating the current registration and administrative use of the building to an alternate site. The displaced visitor registration and administrative offices could be located in a new consolidated Administrative building located near the Sea Galaxy area and the current Corporation Yard site. Consolidate both the Department's and concessionaire's administrative offices in the new facility.*
- *Reduce vehicle use within the Historic Core and improve pedestrian circulation and access by relocating the current visitor registration to a location outside the historic core with better vehicle access. Improve the southern access at the Sunset Drive and Asilomar Boulevard intersection and possibly develop an alternate Northern vehicle entrance along Asilomar Boulevard. Current entrance at the intersection with Sinex Avenue could be used solely for pedestrian and bicycle use. Redesign of pedestrian circulation and reduction of some roadways since only emergency and service vehicles will be permitted within Historic Core.*

- *Maintain current lodging capacity and reduce developed footprint at Asilomar. Future park management should pursue opportunities to remove unneeded facilities or infrastructure to enhance Asilomar's cultural and natural values by minimizing visual intrusions and restoring, when and where possible, the historic landscape.*
- *Preserve, enhance and restore Asilomar Conference Ground's historic landscape. Minimize adverse impacts to the park aesthetic resources by visually integrating any new facilities (such as a new Administrative Building) through siting techniques, building forms and materials.*
- *Provide improved educational and interpretive information to Asilomar visitors by enhancing the current interpretative program with greater diversity of interpretive resources, more emphasis on Asilomar's cultural and natural histories, and more coordinated and informational signage.*
- *Relocate the current operations and maintenance center (at Corporation Yard) away from the historic core to improve park operations and visitor experience. New location could be at the Forest Lodge area or off-site in accordance with local, state and federal regulations*
- *Consider development of a mid-size conference room facility with greater operational flexibility to replace meeting space capacity that will be lost from adaptive reuse or relocation of park facilities (such as the new administrative center). New mid-size conference facility could also enable removal or adaptive reuse of other under-utilized existing meeting space.*
- *Prepare and implement a vegetation restoration and management plan to protect, restore and perpetuate native plant communities and remove non-native and invasive species. Resource management programs for restoration, protection and maintenance of special species wildlife and vegetation should be developed and implemented to accommodate appropriate public uses of the dunes, shorelines and other natural areas within the park. Location of park facilities, buildings and other infrastructure should be designed and sited to avoid sensitive plant and wildlife areas, and protect natural habitat. Recreational facilities should satisfy both user needs and resource protection requirements. Primary park resources should not be significantly impaired to create or enhance recreational opportunities. Development within the park should not be of such capacity, nor of such intensity that significant ecological deterioration of any environmental factor may reasonably be expected to occur.*